

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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REPS. MARKEY, PITTS INTRODUCE WIRELESS 411 PRIVACY BILL TO PROTECT CONSUMERS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), the ranking Democrat on the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet, introduced a bill with Rep. Joe Pitts (R-PA) to protect consumers from having their mobile phone numbers listed in a national wireless number directory without their permission.

Rep. Markey said, "Wireless companies need to ask current wireless consumers first and get their prior, affirmative approval before including them on a national wireless directory database. No consumer should unwittingly find themselves part of a service they don't want. Consumers should not have their current relationship with their wireless phone company turned upside down in privacy-invasive ways unless they give their permission to such a change up front."

"The wireless industry is one of this nation's success stories," said Rep. Pitts. "It offers this country's 150 million wireless users with great service at great prices. Consumers rely on their wireless service to stay in touch with friends, family, and the workplace. The wireless phone industry is planning to list customers in a wireless phone directory sometime next year. The plan is to restrict this service to a 411-type service similar to wireline phone numbers."

The main provisions of *The Wireless 411 Privacy Act* are:

"Opt In" for Existing Subscribers - wireless carriers must have clear preauthorization from all existing wireless users before including the user's name and phone number in any wireless directory assistance database.

"Opt Out" for New Subscribers - at the time of entering into an agreement with new wireless subscribers, wireless carriers must allow all new consumers a clear conspicuous mechanism to decline to participate in any wireless directory assistance database.

No fees for being unlisted - No fees can be charged to consumers for being unlisted in the database.

"Right now it is unclear how the wireless companies will implement this new service. Millions of consumers could potentially find themselves answering the phone to receive calls from people they have not (or would not have) given their numbers or from whom they do not wish to receive calls," Rep. Markey concluded.

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